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ABSTRACT

This teacher's guide is designed to accompany a videotape by the same title which shows communications and education experts discussing the information superhighway, the government's role in its construction, privacy and regulation issues, and the effects of technological advancement on education. The goals of this guide are to help students to: (1) understand the potential impact of the information superhighway on communications in the United States and in their community and schools; and (2) become more aware of potential regulatory problems that may develop as the information superhighway gathers millions of users. The guide includes a list of objectives, key terms, five student activities related to the videotape, handouts and answer keys, and additional suggestions. Suggested activities range from a class debate to a survey of the community. A bibliography contains seven recommendations for further reading. (BEW)

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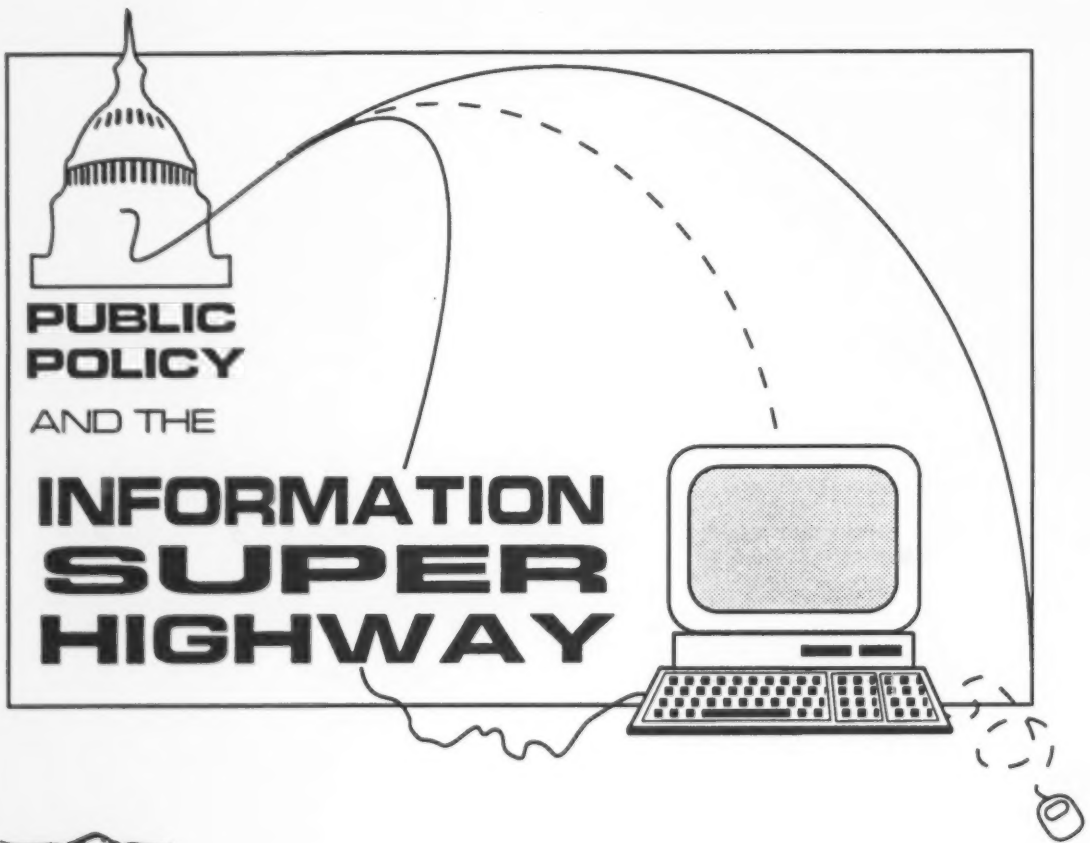
TEACHER'S GUIDE

DEVELOPED BY AMY N. EDWARDS AND TIM WALKER



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PUBLIC POLICY
AND THE
INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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TO THE TEACHER

Experts from the fields of communications and education discuss issues surrounding the "information superhighway" in the Close Up video, "Public Policy and the Information Superhighway." In this 25-minute condensation from a series of programs produced by Close Up Television and Video in 1994, participants discuss the information superhighway, government's role in its construction, privacy and regulation issues, and the effects of advancements in communications on education.

This teacher's guide provides tools to help students better understand these issues. The teaching strategies and activities contained in the guide can be used in a variety of ways. Feel free to develop or adapt the activities to suit your teaching style and the amount of time you have to cover each topic.

GOALS

The video and the activities in this guide should help your students to:

1. understand the potential impact of the information superhighway on communications in the United States and in their community and schools.

2. become more aware of potential regulatory problems that may develop as the information superhighway gathers millions of users.

STRUCTURE OF THE LESSON

The *"Public Policy and the Information Superhighway" Teacher's Guide* contains the following components:

OBJECTIVES

The student objectives include both cognitive and affective goals to help you measure student learning.

KEY TERMS

Key terms that will help students understand the concepts are presented in this section. The following activities will help reinforce student understanding of words and phrases used in this video.

1. Have a group of students develop a crossword puzzle using as many key terms from the activities and video as possible. Distribute copies of the puzzle to all students and have them complete it as a review exercise after viewing the video.

2. Ask pairs of students to define one of the eleven key terms. Their description should be detailed enough for a reader or listener to quickly identify the term. Gather the descriptions and place them in a box. Then, draw the descriptions out of the box one by one and read them aloud. Students should write down the term being described. After you have read all eleven descriptions, ask the class to tell the correct answers in order. Tell them to be alert for these terms as they watch the video.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The teacher's guide contains five activities that require students to exercise their critical-thinking skills and do independent research. The activities also emphasize important information from the video.

STUDENT HANDOUTS

Student handouts can be reproduced for classroom use. Each is keyed to a student activity.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

After you have completed the study of the video, you may want to use one or more of the additional suggestions to give students a sense of closure. The activities will help students synthesize and evaluate the information they have learned and reinforce the scope of the advent of the information superhighway.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of these activities, students should be able to:

1. define "information superhighway."

2. better understand the different opinions about government regulation in the information and communications industry.

3. evaluate how the information superhighway is affecting their community.

4. discuss how the information superhighway is revolutionizing education.

KEY TERMS

censorship
computer virus
cyberpunk
Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
hacking
information superhighway
interactivity
network
privacy
regulation
telecommunications

USING THE ACTIVITIES

You may choose to show the video in its entirety before moving to the activities or you may want to stop after each of the five parts and ask students to complete the appropriate activity. Before showing the video, list the titles of its different parts on the board:

- "Defining the Information Superhighway"
- "Regulation and Privacy"
- "What Role Should the Government Play?"
- "Schools and the Information Superhighway"
- "What Happens Next?"

Instruct students to write down the main points and issues discussed in the video by the featured experts. This will help prepare them for postviewing activities.

ACTIVITY 1

DEFINING THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

Note: This activity should be completed before viewing the video.

Begin this activity by writing "Information Superhighway" and "Federal Communications Commission" on the board. Then, ask students to brainstorm about the information superhighway and tell what they know about it. Write their responses on the board under the appropriate head. Then, ask them to brainstorm about the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and tell what they know about this organization, its purpose, and its scope. Write those responses on the board.

Next, distribute copies of **Student Handout 1—The FCC and the Information Superhighway** and give students fifteen minutes to read and complete the handout. Tell them that the information they learn from this handout will be useful in later activities. After everyone has completed the handout, ask volunteers to share their answers. While discussing, use the "Answers for Student Handout 1" below.

ANSWERS FOR STUDENT HANDOUT 1

1. The information superhighway is an alliance of computer, software, cable, and phone companies to create a high-tech network that will eventually link people to vast amounts of information, new services, and entertainment options. It will influence the manner in which people retrieve, send, and study information.

2. Some possible concerns of users of the information superhighway are censorship, privacy, and licensing.

3. The Federal Communications Commission is a federal government agency that grants licenses for radio and television stations. It also reviews and revokes licenses, requires stations to serve the public interest, and imposes sanctions on stations that broadcast obscene language.

4. The FCC might affect the information superhighway by censoring certain content that is sent on the highway, enforcing regulations on companies that constitute the highway infrastructure, and requiring licensing of users.

ACTIVITY 2

GOVERNMENT REGULATION

While the information superhighway promises major advancements in communications that will make many Americans' lives easier, a number of controversial issues are still being debated, most notably the government's role in overseeing the "construction" of the highway and its workings. Some Americans believe that the federal government should play an active role in overseeing the activity of the highway to prevent crimes and to ensure that the technology is made available to everyone. Others, however, believe that the oversight should be left to private industry and that government should stay out of the way.

Begin by asking students what experts say regarding government regulation in the part of the video entitled "What Role Should the Government Play?" Have students identify the opinions of Eric Rabe of Bell Atlantic and Ruth Milkman of the FCC. How do their opinions differ? What are the opinions of the other participants?

Next, arrange a class debate on the following statement:

The federal government should regulate the information superhighway.

The affirmative side should go first for a set length of time, followed by the negative side for the same amount of time. Each side should be given one or two minutes for rebuttal of any points the other side mentioned. After rebuttals have been completed, ask the whole class which side "won." You may want to organize other debates on topics related to the information superhighway such as censorship and privacy.

ACTIVITY 3

SURVEYING THE COMMUNITY

The information superhighway will have a major impact across the country, changing the way Americans communicate, correspond, and do business. Virtually every person living in the United States will be affected by new technologies in some way.

After students have viewed the videotape and are familiar with some of the issues and concerns expressed by the experts, divide the class into four or five discussion groups. Have members of each group talk amongst themselves about privacy and censorship on the information superhighway. What possible losses of privacy might occur if people communicate through computers instead of letters or telephone? What about crime? Do students foresee an increase in computer hacking or phony financial transactions? What does the information superhighway mean for schools and education? Are students generally excited or apprehensive about the information superhighway?

After the discussion, distribute copies of **Student Handout 2—The Information Superhighway and the Community** to each student. Tell each student to poll one member of the business or education community about issues surrounding the information superhighway.

When finished with the polling, students will compile their results in class, comparing the responses of the different participants. Based on their findings, how do students think the information superhighway is affecting their community and schools?

ACTIVITY 4

SCHOOLS AND THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

Tell students that many experts predict that learning will never be the same once the information superhighway is in place in schools, colleges, libraries, businesses, and government offices. Students, teachers, and other citizens will be able to access vast amounts of information from almost anywhere in the country and world. Ask students to write a one- to two-page essay describing how the information superhighway will likely influence their own education and understanding of the world. Tell students to be prepared to read their essays in class.

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Invite speakers from local companies, businesses, or schools who are involved in the development or use of the information superhighway technology to talk to your class. Possible speakers include representatives from local cable and telephone companies or school and college officials who are bringing new technology into their classrooms. If one of your speakers represents one side of an issue relating to the information superhighway (i.e., government regulation or censorship), try to schedule another speaker with an opposing view.

2. Ask students to write a one-page essay answering the question, "Will individual privacy be compromised by the information superhighway?" Have volunteers read their essays in class.

3. Many students will not grasp what the information superhighway is all about until they have seen it in action. Arrange a demonstration of the new technology for your class. Take them on a field trip to a local business, telephone company, or a department in the school where new technologies are being put to use. Perhaps one or more students in your class are already very active in computer and information technology. Ask them to demonstrate their knowledge to their classmates.

STUDENT HANDOUT 1

THE FCC AND THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY

Read the following paragraphs and answer the questions that follow. You may be asked to volunteer your responses in class.

Every decade seems to bring new, innovative ways of communication. From telegraphs to telephones to television, technology is continuing to evolve. And now Americans have the information superhighway. The information superhighway is a plan that uses an alliance of computer, software, cable, and telephone companies to create a high-tech network that would link people to many new information services and entertainment options. Some Americans have concerns about the information superhighway, including questions about accessibility, privacy, and censorship.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is the government agency that regulates interstate telephone networks and broadcast systems. Because the information superhighway uses phone and cable lines, the FCC is responsible for monitoring this network. In addition, the FCC regulates the content, the nature, and the very existence of radio and television broadcasting. Radio and television stations need licenses to operate; these licenses are only granted or retained by the FCC when the station complies with certain regulations. Because of the FCC's control, will information superhighway users be monitored just as radio and television stations are?

The FCC also requires stations to serve the public interest and imposes sanctions on stations that broadcast obscene language. Therefore, will messages along the information superhighway be required to serve the public interest? Will users be fined for sending obscene messages throughout the highway? Look for opinions on these issues and many others as you watch the video "Public Policy and the Information Superhighway."

1. What is the information superhighway and what influence will it have on communications?

2. What are some possible concerns for users of the information superhighway?

3. What are the duties of the Federal Communications Commission?

4. How might the duties of the FCC affect the information superhighway?

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STUDENT HANDOUT 2

THE INFORMATION SUPERHIGHWAY AND THE COMMUNITY

Ask one representative from a local business or school (teacher, principal, etc.) to respond to the following questions. Record his or her responses in the space below each question. After you have completed your survey, class members will compile the results and discuss how new technologies of the information superhighway seem to be affecting your community.

Respondent's Occupation_____

1. Do you know what the information superhighway is? How would you describe it?

2. How has your business/school used new information processing or communications technology?

3. How has the new technology affected your business/school?

4. Have the benefits of using new communication technology been worth the cost? What, if any, are the liabilities of using this technology?

5. Do you believe that most businesses and schools will eventually have access to this communications and information network? Why or why not?

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FOR FURTHER READING

The following articles will provide further information and perspectives on the information superhighway.

Belsie, Laurent. "North Carolina's Push For Info-Highway Raises Eyebrows." *Christian Science Monitor* (July 18, 1994): 8.

Carey, J. and M. Lewyn. "Yield Signs on the Info Interstate." *Business Week* (January 24, 1994): 88-90.

Henry, Tamara. "Adding an Info Highway Lane for Urban Kids." *USA Today* (July 20, 1994): 5D.

"The Information Revolution." *Business Week* (summer 1994): entire issue.

Lewyn, M. "The Information Age Isn't Just for the Elite." *Business Week* (January 10, 1994): 43.

Meyer, M. R. "The Info-Warriors." *Newsweek* (January 24, 1994): 44-5.

Winerip, Michael. "Classrooms on the Information Superhighway." *The New York Times* (July 20, 1994): B7

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